

Message Text

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46

ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

AID-20 SY-10 EUR-25 NIC-01 RSR-01 /141 W

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O 171652 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9922

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE

USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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BOGOTA FOR ASST. SEC. KUBISCH

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINS BL

SUBJ: SELICH AFFAIR

REF: LA PAZ 2955

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.

1. SELICH FUNERAL TOOK PLACE AFTERNOON MAY 16. EVENT WAS HEAVILY GUARDED AND MONITORED BY POLICE, AND THERE WERE NO INCIDENTS OR VIOLENCE REPORTED. EYEWITNESS REPORTED ABOUT 300 PEOPLE, MOSTLY WOMEN, PARTICIPATED IN WALK TO CEMETARY (PRESS SAID ABOUT 500). NO RANKING OR IMPORTANT MILITARY OFFICIALS WERE SEEN BUT SOME OF THE WOMEN MAY HAVE BEEN WIVES OF THESE. MILITARY REPRESENTATION APPARENTLY LIMITED TO SMALL NUMBER OF CADETS

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FROM MILITARY ENGINEERING ACADEMY. (SELICH SERVICE SPECIALITY WAS THE ENGINEERS.) EYEWITNESS REPORTED ANTI- ARCE SHOUTS FROM THE MOURNERS. PRESS REPORTED THAT CRIES OF " GLORY TO SELICH, DEATH TO COMMUNISM AND TO THE MURDERERS OF COL. SELICH" WERE HEARD.

2. THE MAYOR OF TARIJA, JOSE AZURDUY, IDENTIFIED BY MININTERIOR ARCE ON MAY 15 AS ONE OF THE CONSPIRATORS IN HIDING, WAS CAPTURED WITH THREE OTHER ALLEGED CONSPIRATORS IN TARIJA, BUT ESCAPED FROM CUSTODY MAY 16 KILLING A POLICEMAN IN THE PROCESS. THE GROUP HAS REPORTEDLY ESCAPED TO ARGENTINA.

3. MAY 16 AFTERNOON DAILIES ULTIMA HORA AND NUEVA JORNADA DEFENDED THEMSELVES AGAINST GOVERNMENT CRITICISMS OF THEIR MAY 14 REPORTING OF THE SELICH AFFAIR (LA PAZ 2929) SAYING IN EFFECT THAT BECAUSE ALL GOVERNMENT NEWS SOURCES WERE CLOSED TO THEM IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING SELICH' S ARREST AND DEATH, THEY WERE FORCED TO REPORT WHAT THEY COULD LEARN ELSEWHERE. ULTIMA HORA EXPRESSED SOME REGRET THAT IT HAD MISTAKENLY REPORTED THAT SOME MILITARY OFFICERS WERE ARRESTED WHEN THEY HAD NOT BEEN, BUT NUEVA JORNADA MADE NO APOLOGIES. THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER WORK ON WHETHER ARCE WILL FOLLOW UP ON HIS MAY 16 THREAT TO PROSECUTE REPRESENTATIVES OF THESE TWO NEWSPAPERS FOR THEIR MAY 14 REPORTING. END UNCLASSIFIED.

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4. ONE OF THOSE FALSELY RUMORED TO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED MAY 14, COL. HUGO VEINTEMILLAS, COMMANDER OF THE MILITARY ACADEMY, RECEIVED SEVERAL PHONE CALLS WHILE AT DINNER AT THE AMBASSADOR' S RESIDENCE MAY 16. HE FINALLY LEFT WITHOUT FINISHING HIS DINNER EXPLAINING TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE CADETS WERE " RESTLESS" AND CONCERNED ABOUT HIM, SO HE WAS GOING TO THE ACADEMY TO CALM THEM.

5. COMMENT: THE FACT THAT NO SIGNIFICANT MILITARY OFFICERS WERE SEEN AT SELICH' S FUNERAL SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT HE HAS NO FRIENDS OR EVEN POLITICAL SYMPATHIZERS IN THE MILITARY. MORE LIKELY, THEY FEARED THAT TO ATTEND WOULD CREATE SOME SUSPICION IN THE MIND OF PRESIDENT BANZER AND OTHERS WITH REGARD TO THEIR POLITICAL LOYALTIES.

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6. IN VIEW OF THE BOLIVIAN CONCEPT OF HONOR AND TRADITION FOR REVENGE, WE BELIEVE ARCE, OR AT LEAST POSSIBLY SOME OF THOSE POLICEMEN WHO WERE PRESENT AT SELICH' S DEATH, MAY BE IN DANGER OF AN ATTEMPT TO REVENGE SELICH' S DEATH. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.
SIRACUSA

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NMAFVVZCZ

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*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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